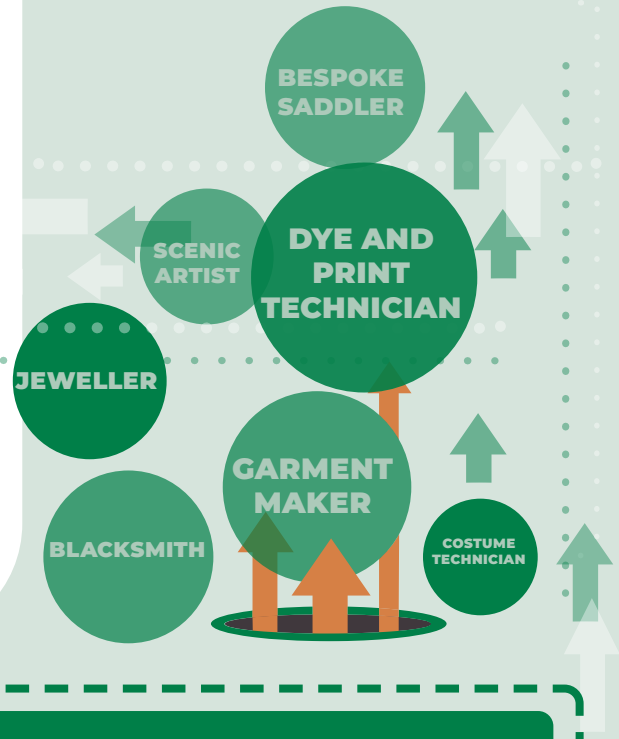
T-LEVELS
THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

STUDENTS: READY FOR YOUR **CRAFT & DESIGN** INDUSTRY PLACEMENT



THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO STEP INTO THE PROFESSION

Your industry placement is not just something to complete as part of your T Level. It is your first experience of a real workplace, where expectations, behaviours and standards matter.

Roles in craft and design often involve supporting how objects, samples, products, garments, textiles, furniture, ceramics, jewellery or upholstery work are designed, made, finished, presented or prepared for customers and clients. This work may not always be highly visible at first, but it is essential.

You will not be expected to know everything. You will be expected to take responsibility, behave professionally, and show that you are ready to learn and contribute.

Employers are giving their time, resources and trust. In many cases, they are inviting you into a studio, workshop, making space or small business where quality, care, safety and attention to detail matter. How you approach your placement will shape the experience you have, how you are remembered and what you learn about your future options.

YOU ARE STARTING TO THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

Your placement is a chance to explore what working in craft and design could look like for you.

You do not need a clear career plan. But being curious about your future will help you get more from the experience.

You can:

- notice which materials, processes, techniques or types of work you enjoy and which challenge you
- learn about different roles in jewellery, ceramics, furniture, upholstery, textiles, fashion, product development, studio support, production, display, retail or creative enterprise
- ask people how they got into their role and what they enjoy about it
- understand how design, making, finishing, presentation and customer or client needs connect
- start thinking about progression into employment, apprenticeships, further study or specialist areas such as maker, designer, technician, studio assistant, production assistant, upholsterer, textiles assistant, fashion assistant, jeweller, ceramicist or furniture maker

Employers often remember attitude, reliability and willingness to learn as much as technical ability.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Your placement is not something that simply happens to you. It is something you take part in and take responsibility for.

This means:

- arriving on time and prepared
- taking tasks seriously, including routine preparation, practice or finishing tasks
- communicating clearly and professionally
- asking questions when needed
- responding to feedback and making changes
- treating the workplace, tools, equipment and materials with care and respect
- following instructions, safety rules and any requirements linked to tools, materials, equipment, processes, confidentiality or customer work
- representing yourself, your college or school and the employer positively

If expectations are not met, placements may need to be reviewed, paused or stopped. This is why it is important to ask for help early if something is unclear or not going to plan.

Your industry placement may take place in an employer's studio, workshop, production space, retail setting, exhibition space or small business, or some activity may be completed remotely. This could include working on a small team project, completing tasks linked to an employer brief, developing design research or sample ideas, or working remotely for the employer in a similar way to other remote workers.

Where activity is completed away from the employer's workplace, this might be from your college or school, home, or another suitable setting agreed with your college or school. Wherever the activity takes place, it is still part of your industry placement. You are expected to take it seriously, communicate professionally, meet agreed deadlines, follow instructions and produce work that reflects the employer's expectations.

WHAT THE ROLE IS REALLY LIKE

Craft and design roles are practical, creative and process driven. Much of the work involves supporting a designer, maker, craftsperson or small team to research, prepare, make, test, refine, finish, present or document work to an agreed standard.

Some tasks may feel routine or low profile at first, but they are part of real work. In many studios and workshops, quality, patience, safe working, accuracy and care with materials are what help the wider process run well. As your confidence grows, you may be trusted with more complex tasks that involve judgement, creativity, technical skill, problem solving and customer or client awareness.

YOU MIGHT START BY

- observing how work is designed, prepared, made, finished or presented
- preparing materials, tools, workspaces, samples or reference information
- supporting simple making, finishing, measuring, recording or quality-checking tasks under guidance
- helping organise materials, products, stock, displays, customer information or workshop resources where appropriate

AS CONFIDENCE GROWS, YOU MIGHT

- take responsibility for a defined task or stage of work
- support a design development process, sample board, materials test, technical record, process log or simple production plan
- develop draft ideas, samples, prototypes, swatches, sketches or finish options with guidance
- respond to feedback by refining, repeating or improving work
- follow up actions from check-ins, reviews or project discussions

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU LEARN

- how ideas develop into finished objects, products or pieces
- how materials, tools and processes affect quality and design decisions
- how safety, preparation and careful working support the whole team
- how client, customer or market needs influence work
- how practice, feedback and refinement build professional skill

WHAT BEING READY REALLY MEANS

A placement is not the same as being in college or school. You are expected to act as part of a workplace, with greater independence and less direct supervision.

Employers are not expecting you to be technically perfect. They are looking for reliability, care, attention to detail, safe working, communication, willingness to practise and respect for the way their studio, workshop or business operates.

YOU UNDERSTAND HOW WORK REALLY HAPPENS

Work in craft and design is often shaped by materials, techniques, tools, processes, design intent, customer or client needs, quality standards and timescales.

Most students begin by observing and supporting tasks before taking on more responsibility. The important thing is to stay engaged and understand how your work fits into the wider process.

Being ready means understanding that you may need to:

- follow clear instructions, processes and safety rules
- work independently on agreed tasks
- manage your time and stay focused, even when tasks take time or need repeating
- focus on care, accuracy, quality and attention to detail
- learn by doing, practising and observing skilled people at work
- adapt when materials, tools, designs or customer requirements affect what is possible
- understand that mistakes, waste, poor communication or unsafe working can affect other people, and raise issues early if you are unsure

If you are unsure what to do, ask. Avoid waiting, guessing or becoming disengaged. Showing initiative is important, but it must sit alongside following instructions and staying within agreed boundaries.

YOU COMMUNICATE AND BEHAVE PROFESSIONALLY

In craft and design workplaces, professional behaviour includes communicating clearly, working carefully and respecting the standards of the studio, workshop or business.

This includes:

- **following instructions carefully**
- **staying focused and following the workplace approach to phones, headphones, breaks, clothing and conduct**
- **using clear and professional language**
- **responding appropriately to emails, messages, calls, check-ins or meetings**
- **working positively with others**
- **using tools, materials, equipment and workspaces safely and responsibly**
- **asking for clarification when needed**
- **not sharing images, designs, customer information, workshop processes or behind-the-scenes material unless you have permission**

Small behaviours make a big difference. Employers often remember how you worked with others and how carefully you approached tasks as much as what you produced.

YOU ARE OPEN TO FEEDBACK AND WILLING TO IMPROVE

Feedback is a normal part of working life. It is not only about what needs to improve. Good feedback helps you recognise what you are doing well, understand what is valued in the workplace and build confidence over time.

In craft and design roles, feedback may help you understand how you prepare, handle materials, use tools, follow a process, refine a technique, check quality, respond to a brief or improve the finish of your work.

Being open to feedback means:

- listening to what you are doing well and building on it
- asking questions if something is not clear
- making small improvements as you go
- being prepared to practise, repeat or refine work where needed
- using feedback to become more confident and independent
- recognising your progress over time

Feedback can come through a quick conversation, a check-in, a review meeting or a comment on a piece of work. The most important thing is to listen, respond positively and use it to improve.

PRACTICAL PREPARATION

Being ready also includes planning the practical details.

- knowing how you will travel and how long it will take
- allowing extra time to arrive early, especially where workshop access, production times, customer appointments or delivery schedules are fixed
- understanding working hours and expectations, including any agreed making, preparation, retail, workshop or event times
- knowing what to wear, including any dress code, uniform, protective clothing, footwear or workshop safety requirements
- knowing whether you need to bring equipment, a sketchbook, notebook, portfolio, laptop, lunch or anything else agreed with the employer
- knowing who to contact if something goes wrong
- thinking about how you will introduce yourself and ask questions professionally

Taking responsibility for these details helps you start your placement confidently and professionally.

BEFORE YOU START – QUICK CHECK

Before your placement begins, take a few minutes to check how ready you feel. It can help to talk this through with your tutor, placement contact, a family member or someone you trust. They may help you think about things you have not considered.

BEFORE YOUR PLACEMENT BEGINS, ASK YOURSELF:	YES	NOT YET	NOTES / ACTION I NEED TO TAKE
Do I understand what is expected of me?	☐	☐	
Am I prepared to start with small tasks and build up?	☐	☐	
Am I ready to take on tasks with guidance, such as supporting material preparation, design research, sampling, making, finishing, quality checks, display, stock, customer-facing or studio support activity?	☐	☐	
Can I communicate clearly and professionally?	☐	☐	
Am I ready to listen, learn and respond to feedback?	☐	☐	
Am I ready to take responsibility for my actions and behaviour?	☐	☐	
Can I manage my time and stay focused without constant reminders?	☐	☐	
Can I take initiative while still following instructions, safety rules and agreed boundaries?	☐	☐	
Will I stay engaged, even when work feels unfamiliar, quiet, repetitive, slow or detailed?	☐	☐	
Will I take this opportunity seriously?	☐	☐	
Do I understand where and how my placement activity will take place, including any workplace, remote or small team project arrangements?	☐	☐	
Do I understand any expectations around tools, materials, equipment, safety, confidentiality, customer work, online sharing or use of images?	☐	☐	
Do I know how I will travel and how long it will take?	☐	☐	
Have I planned to arrive on time or early?	☐	☐	
Do I understand my working hours, dress code, protective clothing, footwear or workshop safety expectations?	☐	☐	
Do I know who to contact if something goes wrong?	☐	☐	

STUDENT, PARENT OR CARER AND COLLEGE OR SCHOOL DECLARATION

This declaration should be signed and returned before the placement begins. It confirms that the student and parent or carer have read the preparation information and understand the expectations, contact arrangements and support available for the placement.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I understand that my industry placement is part of my T Level and must be taken seriously.

I understand that these expectations apply whether my placement takes place in an employer's studio, workshop, business, retail setting, exhibition space, remotely, in college or school, at home, or through a small team project linked to an employer brief.

I understand that I am expected to attend as agreed, arrive on time, behave professionally and follow instructions.

I understand that I must communicate respectfully, ask for help if I am unsure and respond positively to feedback.

I understand that I must stay within the tasks and activities agreed for my placement and follow any workplace rules, including expectations around safety, dress code, protective clothing, tools, materials, confidentiality, permissions, equipment, online sharing and behaviour.

I understand who to contact if I am delayed, absent, worried, unsure or if something goes wrong during my placement.

Student name: .....

Student signature: .....

Date: .....

PARENT OR CARER CONFIRMATION

I confirm that I have read this information and understand the expectations, contact arrangements and support available for the placement.

Parent or carer name: .....

Parent or carer signature: .....

Date: .....

COLLEGE OR SCHOOL CONFIRMATION

Placement or employability officer name: .....

Contact details: .....

DURING AND AFTER YOUR PLACEMENT STARTS

Use these prompts during check-ins, reviews or reflection activities. They can also help you prepare for an end-of-placement conversation or short summary of what you have learned.

REFLECTION PROMPT	MY NOTES
What am I learning about how work really happens?	
What am I doing well?	
What feedback have I received, and what have I done with it?	
What do I need to improve?	
What am I learning about myself?	
Which roles or specialist areas might I want to explore further?	

BEING READY DOESN'T MEAN KNOWING EVERYTHING.

It means being prepared to learn, contribute, communicate and take responsibility. A strong placement is not about being perfect. It is about showing reliability, curiosity and a willingness to learn from the people around you.

SDN
Part of the SDN Mesma Group

Gatsby Charitable Foundation/Gatsby Technical Education Projects accept no responsibility for and excludes all liability in connection with the information and use of this resource, including but not limited to, any liability for errors, inaccuracies, omissions or misleading or defamatory statements. It is assumed that the use of this/these resource(s) will be undertaken in suitable facilities or work areas by suitably trained personnel, and that good practices, appropriate use policies and procedures will be observed at all times.